

Hope in Perilous Times, Part 4 - Acts 20:17-21 – May 24th, 2009

- The Apostle Paul is on his third missionary journey, as it is called, and to say that it's been a rough road would be an understatement.
- He's had threats and attempts on his life, the travels have been unspeakably harsh, and some of the churches are financially broke.
- To make matters worse, as we're about to see, things are about to get worse, in fact, things are going to get whole lot worse.

- It's for this reason I've title this series; "Hope in Perilous Times." Today we'll begin part four after briefly reviewing parts one thru three.
- Acts 20 is perhaps one of the most fascinating chapters in the Bible because in it we have details of the difficulty the early church faced.
- I believe that one of the reasons we have this chapter in our Bibles is because God wants to show us why and how we can have hope.

1. Be Encouraged (Verses 1-2)

- The Apostle Paul was not only encouraged, but he was an encourager as well, as we're told about twice in the first two verses.

2. Be Patient (Verse 3a)

- He patiently stays in Greece for three months because of a plot against him, and during this difficult time he writes the book of Romans.

3. Be Prudent (Verse 3b)

- Because of the threat on his life, Paul prudently decides to back through Macedonia instead of Syria. He's not paranoid, he's prudent.

4. Be Together (Verses 4-5)

- We have the names of several men, whom Paul sends together to Troas as a security measure to protect them from being attacked.

5. Be Flexible (Verse 6)

- What is normally a one day trip, takes five instead, which seems to indicate that this journey was rough, and riddled with uncertainty.

6. Be Comforted (Verses 7-12)

- They we're all comforted when Eutychus, who fell asleep during Paul's sermon then to his death out of a 3-story window is raised to life.

7. Be Strong (Verses 13-14)

- After talking all night, Paul's seemingly strong enough because he walks the 25 miles from Troas to Assos instead of taking the boat.

8. Be Diligent (Verses 15-16)

- Paul decides to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time there because he wants to be diligent and get to Jerusalem by Pentecost.

9. Be Humble (Verses 17-19)

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 **I served the Lord with great humility and with tears**, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews.

v17-18 Upon his arrival in Miletus, Paul sends for the Ephesian elders who come and meet with him so he can share his heart with them.

v19 He does just that; he opens up and pours out his heart telling them he's served the Lord with great humility and tears though tested.

- This is interesting to me. For a man to cry, let alone to admit to another man that he cries, takes a great deal of character and humility.
- Paul was humble, and had a pastor's heart. I suppose this is one reason that I have been really looking forward to this chapter in Acts.
- As one pastor said; "Most of the time in Acts we see Paul the evangelist; but here in Acts 20 we get a unique picture of Paul the pastor."

"It is the only Pauline speech delivered to Christians which Luke has recorded, and it is not surprising to discover how rich it is in parallels to the Pauline letters."

F.F. Bruce

- It is later on in the Pauline letter to this Ephesian church, that he would both exhort and even urge them to "be completely humble."

Ephesians 4:1-3 1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. NIV

10. Be forthright (Verses 20-21)

20 You know that **I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you** but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

v20 Paul tells them how he didn't hesitate to be frank in his preaching because being straightforward and forthright is what helps people.

v21 He goes onto tell them how he declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in Christ.

- This is not a popular teaching today. When we hesitate to be forthright with the truth of God's Word, we are not helping people repent.

"I preach to my congregation week after week. And I pray that I may be able to preach with such convicting power that my people will sweat! I do not want them to leave my services feeling good. The last thing I want to do is to give them some kind of religious tranquilizer--and let them go to hell in their relaxation. The Christian church was designed to make sinners sweat. I have always believed that, and I still believe it. The messages preached in our churches should make backslidden Christians sweat. And if I achieve that objective when I preach, I thank God with all of my heart, no matter what people think of me."

A.W. Tozer, "Jesus Is Victor!" pp. 61-62